



Balsall Heath Community Governance Review – Frequently Asked Questions

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What is Community Governance?

Community governance is the way in which local communities are represented and governed at a local level, and the way local activities and services are organised through the involvement of other statutory and voluntary agencies and community groups and by the efforts of local people themselves. It is also about the way in which individuals and communities are listened to and able to influence decisions that affect them.

What is a parish/neighbourhood council?

Parish/neighbourhood councils are the most local level of government. There is no legal difference between parish and neighbourhood councils – they have the same statutory powers and can provide the same services. The name 'neighbourhood (or town) council' is more common in urban areas, while 'parish council' is used more in rural areas.

They are made up of parish/neighbourhood councillors who are elected by electors (residents) in the affected area.

Parish/neighbourhood councils can own land and assets and can provide or run certain public services at a local level, for example grass cutting, street lighting, open spaces, community buildings, and allotments. For further information about what parish/neighbourhood councils can do, please see the [National Association of Local Councils report, "All about Local Councils"](#).

Parish/neighbourhood councils have two main roles: community representation and local administration. They should reflect a distinctive and recognisable community of place, with its own sense of identity.

Parish/neighbourhood councils offer the potential to:

- Improve smaller areas of the city
- Improve local decision making
- Provide a local voice for the community
- Raise additional public money within their area to support local needs

How are parish/neighbourhood councils funded?

Parish/neighbourhood councils are funded through a sum of money called a 'precept' – this is a separate charge which is added to and collected along with existing Council Tax. The precept is only collected from eligible taxpayers and would not be paid by all residents/households. The precept/charge would only be paid by households who pay Council Tax – the same exemptions and discounts would apply.

Since the precept depends on the size of the parish/neighbourhood council, the services it provides, and the number of properties across which it is spread, it is not possible to say how much a precept would be for an area which does not currently have a parish/neighbourhood council. However, it is estimated that a potential precept in Balsall Heath by a parish/neighbourhood council would be approximately £1 a week per eligible household.

The precept would be used to provide additional services and support to the parish/neighbourhood council area and its residents. The parish/neighbourhood council would decide what it will need for the coming year, and this will depend on what services and facilities are needed by the local community.

Parish/neighbourhood councils can also apply for grants and loans.

Are parish/neighbourhood councillors paid an allowance or salary?

Parish/neighbourhood councillors are not usually paid an allowance or salary but they may incur costs for which they can be reimbursed.

Are there any other parish/neighbourhood councils in Birmingham?

There are currently two parish/neighbourhood councils in Birmingham:

- [New Frankley Parish Council](#)
- [Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council](#)

What is a Community Governance Review (CGR) and why is the City Council undertaking a CGR in Balsall Heath?

CGRs provide the opportunity for principal councils (such as Birmingham City Council) to review and make changes to community governance within their areas. A CGR must make recommendations as to what new parish/parishes (if any) should be constituted in the area under review.

Under the [Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods Policy Statement \(2019\)](#) and [Statement of the Process for Creating New Parish Councils in Birmingham \(2021\)](#), the City Council is satisfied that there is a genuine interest in creating a parish/neighbourhood council in Balsall Heath. It is therefore using its powers to initiate a CGR to evaluate the proposal, consult the public and, if appropriate, test support for it in a consultative ballot. This is in accordance with the [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#).

What is Birmingham City Council's role in the CGR?

Principle authorities, such as Birmingham City Council, are required to work with communities who want to explore forming a parish/neighbourhood council in their area.

The City Council is committed to making sure:

- The proposal is progressed appropriately
- Residents and stakeholders in the area are made aware of the proposal and consulted, as part of a formal Community Governance Review (CGR)
- Local people can find out about the proposal, get involved and have their say
- A consultative ballot is carried out to enable affected residents (who are eligible to vote) to vote for or against the proposal

Who determines the Terms of Reference for Community Governance Reviews?

The 2007 Act requires principle authorities (such as Birmingham City Council) to determine and publish the Terms of Reference under which a CGR is to be undertaken. The Council has done so under the provisions of the [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#) and considering the Government's [Guidance on Community Governance Reviews \(2010\)](#).

The Terms of Reference for this CGR can be found here: [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review - Terms of Reference](#).

What area is covered by the proposal for a parish council in Balsall Heath?

The proposed parish council in Balsall Heath affects two City Council wards: Balsall Heath West, and Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath East. The area would be based on the boundary defined in the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Plan. The population within this boundary is approximately 15,000.

This map shows the proposed area for the parish/neighbourhood council in Balsall Heath: [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review - map of the proposed area](#).

How will the CGR take place?

As the principal authority, the City Council is responsible for conducting CGRs within its electoral area. The Parish Council Working Group (made up of cross-directorate City Council officers) will oversee the CGR and prepare recommendations for the City Council's Cabinet.

The CGR approach has been outlined in the CGR Terms of Reference: [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review - Terms of Reference](#).

These Terms of Reference were approved by the City Council's Cabinet in December 2021.

When does a CGR start?

A CGR is deemed to commence once the Terms of Reference have been published. In this case, the Terms of Reference for the Balsall Heath Community Governance Review were published on 01 February 2022.

How long does a CGR take?

Legislation requires CGRs to be completed within twelve months of the Terms of Reference being published. However, in the spirit of our commitment to improve neighbourhood working, the City Council will endeavour to complete this CGR within six months from the point of publishing the Terms of Reference, not including the consultative ballot.

What are the key stages of the CGR?

A full timetable is set out in the [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review - Terms of Reference](#), but a summary of the key steps is presented below. Please note, the dates below are indicative and are subject to change.

- 1) **Initiation and preparation** – the City Council receives an expression of interest (or petition); Terms of Reference for the CGR are prepared – this happened in 2021
- 2) **Decision to undertake a CGR** – the City Council's Cabinet resolves to undertake a CGR – this happened in December 2021
- 3) **Consultation** – electors and stakeholders in the area are consulted (February to April 2022)
- 4) **Evaluation** – the Council evaluates the proposal and considers responses to the consultation (April to May 2022)
- 5) **Reaching conclusions** – the City Council prepares an initial report and recommendations (May to June 2022)
- 6) **Decision on consultative ballot** – the City Council's Cabinet receives the CGR report and recommendations, and considers whether a consultative ballot of electors in the area should be held as part of the consultation exercise (July 2022)
- 7) **Consultative ballot** – depending on the outcome of stage 6, if a new parish/neighbourhood council is proposed, a consultative ballot will be held to ensure

there is adequate support for the proposal across the local community (expected to take place in autumn / winter 2022)

- 8) **Implementation** – depending on the outcome of stage 7, if a new parish/neighbourhood council is to be created, the City Council will issue a Reorganisation Order and organise elections and the raising of a precept (2022 to 2023)

What must the City Council consider when undertaking a CGR?

The 2007 Act requires principal councils to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:

- Reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and,
- Effective and convenient.

Any parish/neighbourhood council should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity, and electors should be able to identify with the parish/neighbourhood in which they live.

Ultimately, the recommendations made in a CGR ought to bring about improved community engagement; better local democracy; and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

In carrying out a Community Governance Review, the City Council must also consider the wider picture of community governance. This includes taking account of well-established forms of community governance, such as Resident Associations and community forums.

Please refer to the [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review - Terms of Reference](#) for further details on the CGR criteria.

Who decides the outcome of whether a parish/neighbourhood council is created in Balsall Heath?

Birmingham City Council decides on the outcome, following consultation with local people and local groups. The Council will ensure appropriate consultation, reviews and discussions take place – providing opportunities for residents and stakeholders to find out more, have their say, and get involved if they want to do so.

The City Council will invite people to respond to the proposal during a first round of consultation. The online survey and further information can be found here: [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review Consultation](#). City Council officers will then consider all responses received in connection with the CGR (alongside other evidence) before making recommendations to the City Council's Cabinet.

If there is sufficient evidence in favour of creating a parish/neighbourhood council, Cabinet will consider whether a consultative ballot should be held. The ballot will give electors who live in the proposed area the opportunity to vote on whether they support the proposal. The City Council will do this to ensure there is adequate support for the proposal across the local area.

A parish council in Balsall Heath will not be formed without a consultative ballot of eligible residents taking place. A majority 'yes' vote in favour of establishing a parish council is required for it to be progressed. If there is a majority 'yes' vote, the City Council will have to approve this proposed parish council before it is established.

How will the City Council consult and communicate during the CGR?

When conducting the CGR, the City Council must consult:

- Local government electors for the area under review
- Any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the City Council to have an interest in the CGR

The City Council will take account of any submissions (feedback) received in connection with the CGR.

Through the CGR, the City Council will make use of feedback obtained by community groups (including the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Council Steering Group) through their consultation and engagement with the community and will not seek to replicate such consultation. The City Council will expect the consultation to meet a reasonable standard of inclusivity and representativeness and will require that information provided to residents by the proponents of the proposal is accurate and appropriate.

The City Council will assess the adequacy of community-led consultation to ensure there has been inclusive and broad engagement. A list of key stakeholders is required to be included in Ward Plans and this will be used for this purpose. A list of key stakeholders is also included in the [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review - Terms of Reference](#).

The City Council will write to stakeholders which appear to have an interest to inform them of the CGR and invite submissions.

The City Council will also invite submissions from electors on the City Council's online consultation hub, Be Heard: [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review Consultation](#).

How will the City Council share information about the CGR?

Information about the CGR will be made available on the City Council's website and social media channels, and hard copies and translations of this information will be made available on request.

Where possible and appropriate, press releases will be issued, and information will be displayed in public venues in the area under review. The City Council will also attend ward forums in the area to share information with residents.

Information that is inclusive and accessible will be provided to electors on the proposal as part of the consultative ballot.

The City Council will seek to engage with the proposers of the parish/neighbourhood council during the CGR on matters such as boundaries and electoral arrangements to ensure that these matters do not cause a barrier to putting the proposal to the electorate.

The City Council will also discuss with the proposers their initial ideas for the parish/neighbourhood council, such as whether they would like a devolution deal (as offered in the [Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods Policy Statement \(2019\)](#)) to run local services. The details of such arrangements would ultimately be up to the eventual parish/neighbourhood council, but this early dialogue will help us to plan ahead, should a parish/neighbourhood council be created.

The City Council will publicise how it has given effect to the CGR, and a copy of the Order and a map will be available for public inspection at the following locations:

- Birmingham City Council, 10 Woodcock Street, Birmingham B7 4BL

- The Library of Birmingham, Centenary Square, Broad Street, Birmingham B1 2EA
- Moseley Road Baths and Balsall Heath Library, 497 Moseley Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 9BX

What is the ‘consultative ballot’?

A consultative ballot is essentially a vote – it gives people the opportunity to express their opinion on a matter. Another word for this is referendum. In this instance, the consultative ballot will give electors in the affected area the opportunity to say (in confidence) whether they would like a parish/neighbourhood council to be created in Balsall Heath.

There is no legal requirement to conduct a referendum on the establishment of a parish/neighbourhood council; however, the City Council has committed to holding such a vote to ensure that there is adequate support for the proposal across the local community. Residents of the affected area of Balsall Heath who are eligible to vote will be able to vote in the consultative ballot. If the ballot does take place, it is expected to be held in autumn / winter 2022.

Is there a minimum turnout required for the consultative ballot?

As set out in the [Statement of the Process for Creating New Parish Councils in Birmingham \(2021\)](#), a consultative ballot must achieve a turnout threshold of 25%, or the turnout in the last local elections in the area (whichever is lowest). If the turnout is achieved, then a simple majority will decide the issue.

Is the creation of a new parish/neighbourhood council the only option for Balsall Heath?

No. A parish/neighbourhood council is one way that Balsall Heath could work together to find solutions for local problems, but there are alternative forms of community governance/representation.

Other bodies that can represent local residents include community groups and Resident Associations. These are more informal bodies and do not have the legal status of a parish / neighbourhood council – meaning they cannot deliver public services or raise taxes, but they can enable residents to come together to address specific issues in the area. Many such groups already exist or have existed in the past in Balsall Heath.

As part of the CGR, the Council will explore whether alternative forms of community governance would be more suitable for Balsall Heath.

When would any changes come into effect?

Following the conclusion of the CGR, if a new parish/neighbourhood or other council is to be created, or if there is an amalgamation, this will be done by way of a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. A Reorganisation Order can be made at any time, but (for financial and administrative purposes) will normally take effect on 01 April following the date on which it is made, with elections usually the following May.

How does this relate to the City Council’s approach to neighbourhood working and localism/localisation?

The City Council is committed to “helping local neighbourhoods and communities have more influence over the services and decisions that affect their lives”. The Council’s approach to

localism/localisation is about “how we can all work together to liberate the energy, creativity and innovation within our neighbourhoods and empower our communities to achieve their ambitions, [and] working with neighbourhoods to make things work better from the point of view of local residents”.

Parish/neighbourhood councils are one of the several options available for local neighbourhoods to explore which they may decide would help them improve their local area. This and other options are set out in the [Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods Policy Statement \(2019\)](#).

How can I find out more about the CGR and proposal for a parish council in Balsall Heath?

Any queries in respect of the CGR should be directed to the City Council. Please contact us via:

- Email – NDSU@birmingham.gov.uk – *please ensure emails are titled “Balsall Heath Community Governance Review” so it can be directed to the right team*
- Post: Balsall Heath Community Governance Review, NDSU, Stirchley Baths Community Hub, 2-4 Bournville Lane, Stirchley, B30 2JT
- Telephone – 07594 509 938 – *please note, this line is open Monday to Friday between 10am and 4pm*

Information is also available on the City Council's website: [Balsall Heath CGR](#).

Hard copies and translations of information can be made available on request – please contact us via the methods above.